pleased to state when Government are going to remove the ceiling in the Payment of Bonus Act and enhance the ceilings in the Payment of Gratuity Act to make it at par with the gratuity for the Central Government employees?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM): No time frame has been fixed for any amendment of Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 and Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.

Lockout in the Patriot Newspaper Office

2495. SHRIMATI CHANDRA KALA PANDEY: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether a lockout was declared by the Management of the Patriot Newspaper in June, 1996 and the workers have not been getting salaries since May, 1996;

(b) whether Government have taken any action to have the lockout lifted; and if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have taken any steps to ensure payment of salaries to the workers, who have been subjected to untold suffering and hardships; and

(d) if no action has yet been taken the steps Government now intend to take to have the lockout lifted and salaries disbursed?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHAL): (a) to (d) The Management of United India Periodicals (P) Ltd., New Delhi, the publishers of Patriot Newspaper, declared a Lock-out in the establishment w.e.f. 14.6.96. Subsequently the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi issued prohibitory order on 5.8.96 under section 10(3) of the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 prohibiting continuance of the Lockout declared by the Patriot Newspaper Management. The operation of the Prohibitory orders were stayed by the Hon'ble High Court of Delhi vide their order dated 12.9.96. Discussions were held by the Government with both the parties.

Dues of Sugarcane Farmers in Uttar Pradesh

2496. PROF. NAUNIHAL SINGH: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's order to Uttar Pradesh Government to clear at least 50% of the Rs.900 crore dues to sugarcane farmers within one month is unlikely to produce relief to the hard-hit sugarcane farmers;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is a fact that with most of the sugar mills in the State in the red, it would be very difficult for them to clear the dues within the stipulated time coupled with the State Government facing a financial crunch; and

(d) if so, the manner in which this predicament is being coped with?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) and (b) On the basis of the information furnished by the Government of Uttar Pradesh, against the outstanding arrears of Rs.900.34 crores as on 15.6.1996, a payment of Rs. 456.11 crores has been made till 31.7.1996 whereas the target set for the period was to ensure payment of Rs.450.00 crores. The Government of Uttar Pradesh has also informed that the arrears of cane price relating to the sugar season 1995-96 on 24.9.1996 were only Rs. 307.11 crores.

(c) and (d) Question does not arise.

Export of inferior quality Indian goods by traders

2497. SHRI O.P. KOHLI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) wheher Government are aware of the severe criticism by the Ugandan business Community that visited the country recently for the export of inferior quality of Indian goods, terming many of the Indian traders as "cheats";